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*2. Papers Bearing on James Wilkinson's Relations with Spain,
1787-1789.*

IN the article "Wilkinson and the Beginnings of the Spanish Conspiracy" in the April number of the REVIEW,¹ allusion is made to a communication of General James Wilkinson addressed to Miró, the Spanish governor at New Orleans, which Wilkinson framed as a response to the decision of the Council of State in Spain on the propositions submitted in his memorial of August 21, 1787. The attitude assumed by the Spanish government, and the change in local circumstances within the United States since 1787, led Wilkinson to prepare what was practically a second memorial, though in the form of an ordinary letter to Miró. Herein he brings forward an apparently simple scheme for the encouragement of emigration to Louisiana from the American settlements south of the Ohio. The real purpose was so to diffuse the Spanish influence among the Kentuckians in particular that, when they had withdrawn from the jurisdiction of Virginia, they might be ready to establish a close connection with Spain by a commercial treaty, a formal alliance, and eventually perhaps by the conversion of Kentucky, and possibly Tennessee, into a Spanish province. Wilkinson thereupon devised a plan of wholesale bribery in order to pledge the influential men in the Kentucky and Tennessee region to the Spanish cause, or at least to render their opposition innocuous; and incidentally prepared a list of suitable pensioners, with their prices affixed.

In his statement to Congress, speaking of his connection with the Spanish colonial government in New Orleans about 1789, Daniel Clark says (*Proofs, appendix*, 105): "I remember . . . to have seen a list of names of citizens of the western country, which was in the hand writing of the General [*i. e.* Wilkinson], who were recommended for pensions, and the sums proper to be paid to each were stated; and I then distinctly understood that he and others were actually pensioners of the Spanish government." In refutation of this assertion Wilkinson observes (*Memoirs*, II. 113): "It was at this time, I presented a list of respectable names as emigrants, to give consistency to my propositions; and this is, in all human probability, the list of which Mr. Clark may have heard a whisper, when a clerk in the Spanish secretary's office, and which he has converted into a list of pensioners." Not only does Wilkinson thus flatly contradict Clark's statement, but he declares (*cf. ibid.*, 112) that he submitted the list to Governor Miró on the occasion of his first visit to New Orleans in 1787, and not in 1789 as Clark avers.

¹ VIII. 501, note 1.

Researches in the archives of Spain have demonstrated the truth of both of Clark's contentions. We there find the answers of the Spanish council to his first memorial, the letter to Miró of which I have just spoken, and also another letter to Miró and enclosed in it the "list" in question. Spanish translations of these documents are in the National Historical Archives at Madrid, Estado, Legajo 3898 B, and in the Archives of the Indies at Seville, Audiencia de Santo Domingo, Estado 86, Cajon 6, Legajo 17. The letters themselves, as preserved in both repositories, are the same, but the respective "lists" show slight verbal differences in the translation.

WILLIAM R. SHEPHERD.

I. DECISION OF THE COUNCIL OF STATE ON WILKINSON'S FIRST
MEMORIAL.¹

Supreme Council of State.

November 20, 1788.

All members present.

The synopsis furnished by Don Antonio Valdes² of the general matter of encouraging immigrants to the province of Louisiana or of admitting them having been examined, it was decided :

That of the two propositions submitted by Brigadier Wilkinson, of which in substance the first suggests that the king should receive the inhabitants of the Kentucky region as subjects and take them and their territory under his protection, while the second sets forth that the inhabitants of Kentucky and the other settlements [along the rivers] emptying into the Ohio, who might desire to emigrate to Louisiana should be allowed to settle in that province ; it being inadvisable to consider the first until the Kentuckians attain the independence from the United States to which they aspire, although they should not be suffered to lose hope that in case of success they would be admitted [as subjects], the second project should be adopted, and that all be allowed to enter as settlers who might come of their own accord, or might be brought by the brigadier aforesaid, with their families, property, and cattle, exclusive of mere vagabonds, and granting to the settlers the private enjoyment of the religious faith they profess, though not the public observance of it, for the churches must all be Catholic, with Irish Catholic priests and clergy.

That property of every kind, cattle, and produce, and even marketable commodities, brought from Kentucky and the Ohio country by families or individuals who may come to settle in the territory of that province, are to be exempt from all duties and imposts upon their first entry, without reference to the duty of 25 per cent. levied³ upon the produce of

¹ Archivo Histórico-Nacional, Madrid, Estado, Legajo 3893 A.

² The minister of war and treasury of the Indies.

³ This was the rate fixed by the Spanish government in the orders sent to Miró concerning the scheme of colonization offered by Pierre Wouves d'Argès. See the note following. Archivo Histórico-Nacional, Estado, Legajo 3893 A. Florida Blanca to Valdes, August 3 and 20, 1787 ; Valdes to Miró, August 23, 1787.

Kentucky; but they shall be subject later to the payment of the usual duties as established, upon exportation.

That henceforth a duty of 15 per cent., instead of 25 per cent., as imposed by previous order, shall be levied upon the inhabitants of Kentucky who elect to remain there and ship produce by the Mississippi to New Orleans, this produce being subject later to the payment of the regular export duties in case it is reshipped elsewhere; and that the governor of the province is to be authorized at his discretion to make any reduction he pleases of this 15 per cent. for the benefit of prominent persons who may request this favor, so as to preserve the attachment of those already well inclined to our government, and similarly to dispose the remaining ones, it being understood that they are to be favored in all possible ways under the actual circumstances, and that they will continue to be favored whenever more opportune conditions appear.

That, although the propositions of Brigadier Wilkinson deserve the preference as being more practically advantageous, nevertheless, since M. Wouves d'Argès¹ also would be busied, as he has been, in promoting emigration to the aforesaid province, and since [his project] has been adopted by the government, he should not be abandoned; nor would it be decorous or befitting our good faith to put off and dismiss this d'Argès. But as there is a risk that in the performance one may clash with the other,² from which very pernicious disagreements might result, Governor Miró should be enjoined to try, with the greatest sagacity and tact, to reconcile the interests that bestir both, and to wean d'Argès from the idea of bringing emigrants from Kentucky, with the assurance that the king will reward his zeal as his conduct may warrant.³

That Brigadier Wilkinson shall be given a like hope of remuneration, while at the same time he is to be sounded guardedly so as to ascertain what his desires are.

And so far as the aforesaid Governor Miró and the subordinate officials of that government are concerned, if they distinguish themselves in zeal and ability, their promotion and reward will be duly considered.⁴

¹ Beginning in 1787 Louisiana became the object of many colonizing schemes promoted by Gardoqui, the Spanish minister to the United States, and by various private individuals. The most prominent of these persons were Colonel George Morgan of New Jersey, and Pierre Wouves d'Argès, formerly an officer in the French army. The Spanish government, it will be observed, had already approved the project of Wouves d'Argès, when Wilkinson's memorial arrived. For some account of this colonization movement see Gayarré, *Louisiana: Spanish Domination*, 197 *et seq.*

² *I. e.* Wilkinson with d'Argès.

³ These remarks and injunctions about Wilkinson and d'Argès are based upon a letter from Miró to Valdes, January 8, 1788, Archivo Histórico-Nacional, Madrid, Estado, Legajo 3983 A.

⁴ The entire decision was approved by the king December 1, 1788, and accordingly despatched to Miró. Archivo Histórico-Nacional, Madrid, Estado, Legajo 3893 A.

II. WILKINSON'S SECOND MEMORIAL.¹

NEW ORLEANS, September 17, 1789.

Sir:

I have determined to come down to this city because I want to further the interests of Louisiana, which I could do but blindly so long as I was in ignorance of the action of the court in regard to my memorial; and because I wished to tell you about certain delicate matters which, if discussed orally, might produce better results, assuring myself at the same time of my proper course of conduct in future. The issue has met my expectations, for I have had the satisfaction of learning upon my arrival that the orders which His Majesty has been pleased to give you, with the exception of one point, are in accordance with the soundest principles of good policy, and it was with the greatest complacency that I perceived that you yourself agreed with me in the chief matters of opinion. Yet, in spite of the singular satisfaction afforded me by the private conversations I have had with you, I believe it necessary to put my reflections in writing, which you may corroborate as you see fit and send with your approval to the minister, in order that when placed before His Majesty he may act as the royal pleasure dictates.

During the past winter certain events have occurred which have upset the original plan that I submitted to you and Mr. Navarro in my memorial of the year 1787, and consequently it seemed to be my duty to see whether the arrangement could be changed so as to render its execution more certain and assured, while the advantage to the crown remained the same. Prepossessions in favor of my first opinion, attachment to my own way of thinking, and doubts of my fitness to hit upon a proper method that would assure to His Majesty all the advantages desired, and that at the same time would remove any obstacle in the way of its prosecution, presented themselves to me as arduous difficulties, and for a long time they made me irresolute and perplexed. But from force of duty, which prevailed over every other consideration, I adopted the following plan: "It will be more useful to the court of Spain to lay aside the idea of receiving the people of Kentucky under the dominion of His Majesty, and to employ all indirect means to cause the separation of this section of country from the United States, which would likely be followed by a connection with Spain to the exclusion of any other power, Kentucky enjoying the right of local self-government; and at the same time to promote emigration to Louisiana." You will recollect that in my memorial I suggested this method as an alternative in case our chief and primary object did not succeed; but to justify it I am aware that various powerful motives must coincide, which it seems proper to set forth here. Permit me, therefore, to call your attention to the circumstances of the American Union at the period when I wrote my memorial, and you will observe that its government was weak, confused, and divided, powerless

¹ A translation of the Spanish copy found in Archivo Histórico-Nacional, Madrid, Estado, Legajo 3898 B. Cf. THE AMERICAN HISTORICAL REVIEW for April, 1904, 490, note 2.

to manage or to regulate the propensities of the smallest district ; but the present [form of government] set up by the recent Federal Convention, although untried and of doubtful success, has inspired the people in general with the loftiest hopes, because, without taking into consideration the innumerable causes that are likely to afford extreme hindrance to the beginnings of this government as well as to its progress, they allow themselves heedlessly to be carried away by the novelty, and ascribe to it all the strength of the most powerful monarchy. Such are the ideas and notions that prevail with the majority of men, whose imagination both habits and education have accustomed to wander without restraint or regulation, deaf to the voice of reason or philosophy, until some private misfortune or public calamity replaces them under the sway of sound thinking and mature reflection. To this cause one must attribute chiefly the suspension [of the movement] for the separation of Kentucky from the United States, although I cannot help remarking that the long silence of the court after the receipt of my memorial gave rise to fears which [as] I explained the people felt, and led to apprehensions among various prominent men already gained over to our party, because without any response from Spain we could not expose ourselves, ignorant as to whether or not she would sustain us, to the risk of entanglement with the Congress ; for in case of a negative we were ruined, obliged to expatriate ourselves or to place ourselves under the protection of Great Britain. The truth is that if the people of Kentucky were now as unanimous and conformable as when I made my first visit to Louisiana, we would have had nothing to fear from the power of the Congress ; but unfortunately, for the reasons that I have just mentioned and the propositions of Great Britain, they are divided in sentiment and policy, and although through my own activity and earnest endeavor I have won a decisive superiority among all classes of that section of country in favor of the interests of Spain, nevertheless the open attempt to destroy the government of the United States would have exposed the leaders of the party, and any interposition of the court of Spain in their behalf probably would have produced war between the two nations. What has been said I flatter myself will suffice to justify the opinion that emigration to Louisiana should be the object to which we ought henceforth to devote ourselves, and that it will be more to the interest of His Catholic Majesty to enter into an offensive and defensive alliance with the Americans [*i. e.* the Kentuckians] than to admit them as subjects, and to strengthen this view I add the following reflections :

I think that besides the benefits which will result from commercial intercourse, the important advantage of which Spain can assure herself by placing the Americans of the west under her dominion is to render them a barrier against the usurpations of Great Britain and the United States.

Whenever the people of Kentucky withdraw from the government of the United States, and declare themselves subject to Spain, it will behoove the dignity and honor of the king to take measures to protect them and to introduce the exercise of his own government, which by reason of the

local circumstances of a country so distant and so difficult of access would entail great expense in time of peace, which would become enormous in time of war with Great Britain or the United States: on the contrary, if the people of Kentucky were to withdraw from the United States, establish their government, and enter into a strong offensive and defensive alliance with His Catholic Majesty, these prodigious expenses would be avoided, and that section of country, bound by its own interests, would still continue to serve as a barrier for Louisiana and Mexico as fully as if it were under the jurisdiction of Spain; and the Congress would have no reason to justify any rupture with His Majesty, so that at one stroke the risk and the expense would be obviated, while at the same time the object would be as completely attained.

Emigration is what ought to occupy the position of preference over every other design, because it can be carried on by direct means without peril to individuals and without prejudice to the relations of Spain with the Congress; and if Louisiana becomes populous, as we hope, the misgivings now excited by the settlements along the Ohio will disappear, and the Spanish government may vary its policy as it sees fit according to its interests, compelling the inhabitants to subscribe to the conditions of alliance and commerce it may choose to dictate.

While the greatest exertion is being made in promoting emigration, secret and indirect agencies ought to be set at work to accomplish the above-mentioned separation and independence from the United States. To do so, the safest and most certain means is that of attracting to us the interest and regard of the influential men in the principal settlements; and for this purpose you should be authorized, under such restrictions as the court may deem necessary, to distribute pensions and rewards among the chief men in proportion to their influence, ability, or services rendered. The advantages that such a method can bring forth are unmistakable, as the courts and kingdoms of Europe have frequently found out, because, if drawn over to the Spanish interest, the men of influence among the Americans of the west will direct the course of opinion in their assemblies, and whether or not they may be able to effect the separation from the United States, they will always be in a position, by this means, to check any hostile intent upon the settlements in Louisiana, and to further emigration from among their own number. So far, by my personal efforts as well as by the influence of my friends, and with some sacrifices of my property, I have grounded these interests in Kentucky, but such a condition of affairs should not be confined to this region alone, but should be set up more or less in all the settlements along the Ohio, according as the nature of our business may require and the circumstances may afford opportunity. One may object, perhaps, that I am laying down a costly system of action, calculated to increase the fortunes of certain private individuals, rather than to further the interests of His Majesty: to which I will say that in the common occurrences of human life expenses are always proportionate to gains; that this is the usual method of ministers in political undertakings; that Great Britain now

has adopted it in its propositions made through the agency of Colonel Conolly¹; and that twenty or thirty thousand dollars, distributed annually with caution and good judgment among the Americans in their own country, may eventually save the crown twenty or thirty millions and a vast expanse of rich territories. To make this assertion clear, let us suppose that a body of 4,000 men with artillery should come down the Mississippi, and attack and capture Natchez: so long as you are ignorant of the exact number and precise objects of this warlike gathering, you would naturally apply to the captain-general [at Havana] for aid. He, if his forces allowed it, would assign 2,000 men to help you, but they certainly could not arrive in time to be of any assistance, since the blow would be dealt before the news could reach Havana. But how much will this movement of troops from Havana to Louisiana cost the court? Attempt to answer this question, and you will encounter an irrefragable argument in favor of my plan of action, and a complete answer to the objections which I suggested above to the contrary.

The designs of Great Britain, as well as the policy that the Congress may follow, alike concern His Catholic Majesty to the extent that the passing moments for working with vigor should not be lost. I do not doubt that Great Britain will continue its attention to this object, ready to seize the first advantage which presents itself. The Congress has an alternative, but it is hard to say whether it will confine its policy to the interests of the Atlantic states and abandon the western country to its fate, or whether it will strive to win the affection of the Westerners and strengthen their ties of connection with the United States. In the midst of the variety of arguments and opinions which have been offered on this question, the people are perplexed over its solution. My opinion is that the discordant and irreconcilable interests of the two sections of country absolutely prevent their real connection. Whenever the western settlements believe themselves to be in a condition to assert their independence, every measure that the Congress may take to retain this region will serve to precipitate the event that it wishes to avoid. Still, such is the thirst for power and dominion inherent in mankind, and so likely is the mental process of public bodies as well as of private individuals to encounter opposition caused by interested or ambitious projects, that I believe that the Congress may follow the latter plan; and in this case its first designs will be to check emigration to Louisiana, and to win over the prominent men of the western country to the interest of those of the Atlantic, which is the greatest obstacle and danger that we can apprehend for the success of our ideas; but as desperate maladies require desperate remedies, and the Congress will have no other alternative to restrain emigration, it will find itself compelled to render the citizens of the western settlements ill-disposed toward the subjects in Louisiana, secretly instigating the former to commit depredations on the frontier posts and settlements, which at one stroke will sever all friendly relations between the two sections of

¹ In the service of Lord Dorchester, the governor of Canada at the time.

country. I have no doubt that in appearance the Congress will respect the representations of the court of Spain, and that it will disapprove such outrages, issue proclamations, and offer rewards for the apprehension of the perpetrators; but at the same time the power will be there to resort to a special sort of connivance at such actions, and it will allow the authors to remain unpunished. Such intrigues are common in the European courts, and the matter of the Falkland islands, although not precisely the same, is not altogether inapplicable. Nor is the danger less to be feared that they¹ may intend to assure the predominant interests of the country, for under the new government many ministers and officials are likely to be appointed for the executive and judicial departments, and undoubtedly these will be chosen with every precaution from among the citizens of most ability and influence. If the Congress has these measures in mind and makes them effective, all our projects are ruined from the beginning, in which case the Americans of the west, far from being the friends of Spain, will become her enemies; and instead of forming a barrier for Louisiana and Mexico, they will busy themselves in conquering the one and attacking the other, before the disunion from the Atlantic states takes effect; but these arrangements in view of the slow progress of popular assemblies, and under the impulse of the business that should occupy the attention of the Congress during the infancy of the new government, will require much time; to seize this interval and to take advantage of the occasion are certainly the true policy of Spain, are my longings, are my desires; and my solemn supplications are that they should not be allowed to slip, and being ever ready on my part to work or to advise, I will promptly carry out your instructions.

Under such circumstances, it remains for you to determine whether it is of the greatest interest to the crown that you endeavor immediately to anticipate the intentions of the Congress and to overthrow the present designs of Great Britain; the moment is critical and if lost will produce the most fatal consequences. It is for you, sir, to determine the extent of the power and judgment vested in you by His Majesty, but I am decidedly of opinion that not a moment should be lost in taking measures to widen and strengthen generally the influence of Spain in the American settlements of the west, and that means be adopted immediately to win over to the actual service of His Catholic Majesty the distinguished "notables" of Kentucky, which by reason of its location, numbers, and flourishing condition is the most important of the American settlements to the west of the Appalachian mountains, and consequently merits the most particular attention. Let Spain, therefore, avail herself of the favorable impression already made there, and from that section of country as a center active and intelligent emissaries can diffuse her interests and extend her influence through the vast and scattered settlements of Cumberland, Franklin, Holstein,² New River, Green Briar, Tiger's Valley, Monongahela, Alleghany, and the settlements now form-

¹ The United States.

² Holston? [ED.]

ing to the northwest of the Ohio on the rivers Muskingum and Miami. I am the more urgent on this point because several of the ablest and most zealous partizans of Spain, especially Mr. Sebastian, are resolved to emigrate to Louisiana, on which supposition I shall lose some of my most distinguished coadjutors, it not being in my power to hinder their purpose, since in it they consult their personal interest, and I cannot offer them any recompense adequate to the sacrifice they are likely to make by staying in Kentucky ; because, sir, without feeling the undue desire to boast of my own merits, I can assure you in sacred truth that the zeal with which I have prosecuted this cause for two years has led me to take steps which have obliged me to give presents, to lend money, and to increase my private expenses, which fact has placed me in the most cramped and critical of situations ; unable longer to maintain my personal influence in the same fashion, and that of many who coöperate with me, unless the government assists me. You know that the shipments of tobacco which I was permitted to make have brought me but little profit, and that I have suffered considerably from the destruction of boats, from the rain, and from the poor condition of the commodity, for a large part of it was rejected. I allude to this detail with extreme repugnance, but I am resolved to explain my position candidly, without giving vain hopes — with which observation I shall say nothing further on the subject.¹

I beg of you to pardon my boldness if I discuss the points in His Majesty's royal order which you have had the condescension to communicate to me in response to my memorial of 1787. I fancy that the great art of organizing political projects is to adapt them to the genius of the people among whom they are to be realized, and in this respect the ministry has worked with the greatest success.

The prudent precaution and judicious determination of the first article, in regard to the expectation that Kentucky will have declared itself independent before admitting it to any connection, are beyond all praise, and I flatter myself that I shall employ it with special advantage for our project.

The general admission of immigrants, with the exception of vagabonds, and the toleration of religion ought to be highly approved, and the extension of immigration and the exemption from duties in favor of the actual inhabitants were absolutely necessary ; but I regret to see myself compelled to disapprove most expressly the general freedom of commerce allowed subject to the duty of fifteen per cent., because it will entail the most pernicious consequences from whatever point it be examined : it is expressly contrary to all the principles I have set forth on the subject, and it will prejudice directly the great objects of emigration and separation from the United States, because the people along the Ohio will pay very willingly the fifteen per cent. in order to enjoy freely the commerce of the Mississippi, since owing to the superiority of climate and soil, even with this detraction, they can sell the produce of the

¹ Cf. below, page 763.

country more cheaply than the inhabitants of Louisiana, and for these reasons will naturally prefer to stay in their present location. So as not to abuse unnecessarily your patience in the present matter, I beg of you to recall my letter of February 12,¹ in which I discussed this point at length: this commerce, therefore, ought to be absolutely prohibited, and the sooner the better, for it deprives me of the most powerful instruments that I can use to promote the wishes of His Majesty, and I fear it will upset all our plans.

The arrangement for the granting of lands is the most favorable for populating that could be devised; but in order to adapt it to the prominent men of Virginia, you ought to have the power in special cases to increase the quantity to 3,000 acres,² because many of them have from 100 to 300 negroes, and they have been accustomed to extensive grants ever since the first settlement of North America. The remainder of the royal order I find without exception to be very suitable for the end proposed.

Since the plan of assigning lands to immigrants meets my approval, in order to justify the apparent unsteadiness of my conduct I must explain to you the motives that led me to ask Mr. Gardoqui for 6,000 acres. You are well aware that I have always been opposed to the plan of Colonel Morgan:³ to frustrate this project, by preventing emigration to his settlement, which I regarded as dangerous to Louisiana and unbefitting the crown under the conditions of which he boasted, was one of the objects of my solicitude; to assure a refuge and a settlement for myself and friends, in case of misfortune, was the second motive; but the most important consideration that drove me to it was that of engaging my political associates in Kentucky in some interesting affair likely to show up their principles and opinions, which would serve as a guaranty of their faithfulness whenever tested or jeopardized, this being at the same time a recompense for the aid they had afforded me. This was the more necessary because I knew very well that one of these gentlemen, Mr. John Brown, would be our representative in the new Congress, in which it was indispensable that I should have a confidant, and as he had full knowledge of our ideas, prudence demanded that I should make clear on my part the obligation which held him to silence and fidelity. When the position in Congress was offered me by the people, I declined it because my presence in Kentucky was very necessary for our purposes, and consequently it was given to Mr. John Brown. This gentleman

¹ See Gayarré, *Louisiana: Spanish Domination*, 223 *et seq.*

² The "arrangement for the granting of lands" was that approved by the Spanish government in the colonizing project of Wouves d'Argès. Cf. above, p. 749, note 3, 750, note 1. The orders despatched to Miró in this connection prescribed that no more than 300 *fanegas* should be allotted to one settler. Archivo Histórico-Nacional, Estado, Legajo 3893 A. Valdes to Miró, August 23, 1787. Miró, of course, had informed Wilkinson of the undertaking of Wouves d'Argès, and the official correspondence of the time shows that the American speedily superseded the French officer as an emigrant agent for Spanish Louisiana.

³ Cf. page 750, note 1.

immediately after his election to the Congress intended to withdraw from the connection he had formed with us, in his argument with me making use of the strong reason of the incompatibility of keeping a seat in the Congress while he was negotiating with the Spanish minister for a settlement in Louisiana. This step clearly proved how excellent my precautions had been, because if he had not been previously pledged along with us to submit the request to Mr. Gardoqui, he would have deserted our cause and divulged our confidences without fear of misapprehension or of public censure. I protested vigorously against his proposition, and appealing to the critical situation of our section of country, to the duties with which we were bound toward it, and to the solemn obligation that held us together, I drew a lively picture of the consequences that would necessarily attend union, fidelity, and perseverance, depicting in contrast the terrible spectacle that would accompany disunion, treachery, and dejection of mind. After some difficulty he resolved to adhere firmly to our plan, and agreed to send me regularly all the proceedings of the Congress which might affect our cause.

For my part, I would keep silent, although you have asked me to state my desires, if I were not in such critical circumstances: I left the United States voluntarily, without being sure of admission by Spain; I have rejected honors and rewards offered me by Great Britain, and declining the preëminence with which the United States paid me court, I have employed my time, my property, and all my faculties in promoting the interests of the Spanish monarchy; by reason of this conduct I have exposed myself to the wrath of the American Union, without knowing whether my person would be protected, whether I would be indemnified for the loss of my property, or whether His Catholic Majesty would compensate me for my labors. I am not discontented, because I know it was very proper that I should prove clearly and unmistakably the integrity of my principles and my faithfulness, before I could set up any pretense to the favor of the king; but I flatter myself that the solemn obligations which I owe to my wife and three small children will justify the petition which I now submit to the munificence of His Majesty for some settlement upon me that will compensate for the actual sacrifices I have made, and safeguard me against any misfortune I might suffer from the resentment of the United States, where my property lies. You have seen the proposition made me by Lord Dorchester through the medium of Colonel Conolly, but I have not acquainted you with the extent of his offers, nor shall I do so lest I be accused of exaggeration. I have assured you that I recently declined the election to the Congress, and from motives of policy I turned the election in favor of Mr. John Brown. This, sir, is a fact that I can prove; what more can I say of myself? I abhor the idea of venality, while modesty, delicacy, and self-esteem all forbid that I should set an estimate upon my own worth. Accordingly I beg your permission to refer my circumstances to the justice and goodness of His Majesty, with the remark that, having been reared in the profession of arms, I prefer a military commission, because I know that

the force of my genius inclines to the science of war, and that in this capacity I can afford the strongest proofs of fidelity, loyalty, and zeal ; to which I will add merely that in case of death the allowance made to me should go to my wife and children.

In my letter of February 12,¹ to which I most earnestly beg you to refer, I described the proceedings of the people of Kentucky up to that time ; later they chose a new convention, by virtue of a law of the state of Virginia, with the power to reconsider the subject of separation and to take the measures necessary to obtain its admission to the Union as an independent member of the federal body, if they should judge the same advisable. This convention was elected in April and was to meet on the twenty-fourth of this month and continue in session till January 1, 1791. But as the general tenor of the news I received from the Atlantic states during the months of March, April, and May led me to believe that the Congress had divined our policy, and that it was greatly alarmed over the measures taken by Great Britain and Spain in reference to Kentucky and the western regions, it became doubtful whether its fears and apprehensions would not cause it to admit us into the Union, should we renew our request to this end ; hence I judged it advisable to change our policy, and consequently I took measures with my friends to forestall such a request, because our admission would reinforce the bonds of the alliance, and when once we had become part of the federal pact, our withdrawal would be made more difficult and more susceptible of objections in the eyes of mankind. Having declared the separation from Virginia necessary and impressed this idea on the minds of the people, it is our intention to remain in the present condition until circumstances appear that will justify our rejection of the government of the Congress ; and in this case, nothing can aid us so much as the promise of protection and support which His Majesty has deigned graciously to give. I shall leave within a few days, and going by a route full of dangers and difficulties through the midst of Indian nations, I hope to arrive in Kentucky within sixty days. As soon as I arrive and can prepare my friends for the occasion, I shall present myself at the convention and let the members know of the kind and liberal intentions of His Majesty ; and if the circumstances are favorable, I will seize the moment to propose and force along the separation desired ; but if anything should hinder our purpose at this juncture, I will take the proper measures and await a more favorable occasion. At the same time I will devote all my attention to the plan of emigration, on which I shall labor incessantly, encouraging it throughout the western settlements, for which object it will be essential for me to send confidential agents from Kentucky to the respective settlements elsewhere in the wilderness, who will scatter the inducements offered to emigrants, proclaiming the advantages enjoyed by the inhabitants of Louisiana, making known the friendly disposition which His Majesty graciously displays in favor of the Western Americans, and so as to draw over to our

¹ Gayarré, *Louisiana : Spanish Domination*, 223 *et seq.*

interest two or three prominent men of the most select kind in every district. It is superfluous at this point to show that the execution of these indispensable arrangements will mean considerable outlays, because an individual cannot be found who will serve the public gratuitously unless his personal safety is immediately concerned in it, and you well know from the reasons above mentioned that it does not lie in my power to meet the expense; in order then to realize the intentions of the court, to further the prosperity of Louisiana, which depends upon its being peopled, and to promote the separation of Kentucky from the United States, I feel confident that you will believe yourself sufficiently authorized to advance me the necessary amount, which I should estimate at 7,000 dollars at least, for I must assure you that without this aid you cannot expect from me anything other than prayers and good wishes, since my actual plight is so critical and embarrassed that it will restrain the vigorous efforts of my being, and will bring upon me an infinite amount of labor to support my family and take care of my private affairs.

Thus having given a glance, sir, at the past and examined the present condition of our political plan by looking into the causes that might be of prejudice to it, let us carry our ideas forward and see what political system is best for hastening emigration, winning and securing the constant affection of the emigrants for the crown, preserving the province in tranquility, and safeguarding it from any foreign invasion. I will consider this important object collectively, because its close connection and dependence prevents its treatment in detail. The great inducement for emigration is that tobacco may find a market in Louisiana; this important matter ought to be carefully arranged so as to excite emigration, removing at the same time all possible causes for future discontent or complaint: to do so His Majesty should enlarge the quantity purchased every year to 10,000,000 pounds; this will satisfy the liveliest hopes of the Americans, and since it would be to their interest to emigrate without loss of time, the province would gain a huge increase in subjects within ten years. Indeed for the success of our plan it is indispensable that the purchase of tobacco be increased immediately, because if the present harvest, which greatly exceeds the two millions [ordinarily bought], be not taken, complaints and clamors will be aroused, which, when they reach the American settlements, will check the emigration at the outset and destroy our nascent projects.

I shall do all in my power to further the populating of Natchez, preferably to that of L'Ance à la Graisse, for the many obvious reasons above mentioned; just the same, I am firmly of opinion that the latter post is where the large armed force of the province ought to be stationed; a respectable force planted so near the Ohio will inspire confidence in our American friends, and lessen their apprehensions of the power of the Congress: a garrison of 200 men with an armed vessel manned by fifty sailors will amply suffice at present to protect the lower settlements against any sort of outrage or any band of marauders from whom an attack might be feared. But, sir, no time should be lost in assembling

and arming the militia by companies, battalions, and regiments officered by the most respectable of their countrymen ; which fact will, at the same time, appeal to the self-esteem and honor of the better class of men to uphold the government, and will tend to abolish the distinction among subjects, which is always poor policy and often dangerous : when such measures have been judiciously taken, you will have a respectable force always ready to work in combination with the regular troops.

But, sir, while these arrangements are sufficient for our immediate convenience, it is our duty to look forward to the immense population that is likely to cover the banks of the Mississippi and its tributary streams, and for the purpose of assuring the permanent welfare and maintaining the peace of the empire, we ought to measure our designs by a proportionate scale. Powerful indeed is the consideration. At present, the products of Louisiana and the American settlements are of little account, but in a few years the scene will change. When all this vast and fertile extent of country to the west of the Appalachian mountains, full of rich materials, is about to flood Europe with the abundant variety of its products, what are likely to be the consequences, if the commerce of Louisiana continues in its present condition? The tobacco, hemp, flour, rice, indigo, cattle, pork, iron, copper, etc., etc. — who will take them, or what will become of them? The royal treasury cannot consume all of them ; the farmer will not effect the exchange of his products with the merchant for his goods ; the latter will not be able to pay him at reasonable rates in specie ; under which circumstances the empire may be tormented with convulsions and dismembered by revolutions, and the cause of all these calamities, if the matter be well investigated, will be found to have started from the impediments entangling our commerce. Our navigation being confined at present to Spanish vessels, and our commerce to a few Spanish ports and islands, rivalry, which is the vital principle of commerce, is dead, and the immediate consequences follow ; our merchandise in dry goods is now sold at from 75 per cent. to 150 per cent. more than in North America, and the freightage of one cask of tobacco from New Orleans to any part of Europe costs as much as four casks from any part of the United States to the same place. Permit me to observe that this lack of freedom of commerce I fear will be extremely injurious to the people of Louisiana, nor will the province ever attain the wealth, importance, and splendor for which it seems fitted until this cause be removed. Still, how simple is the remedy, sir, for all these evils so stupendous : let New Orleans be a free port under all the necessary restrictions favorable to the Spanish marine, and these threatening calamities will disappear ; the transportation of tobacco will be restricted to Spanish vessels by a moderate freight-charge, and Cadiz will be the general depot for its receipt, from which port it may be exported to any part of the world, and in less than fifty years all Europe will depend upon Spain for this article ; because, as soon as a free commerce along the Mississippi is established, the cultivation of tobacco will be shifted entirely from the eastern to the western part of America, from the exhausted lands of the

Atlantic to the fertile regions of the Ohio and the Mississippi. What a mighty source of revenue is offered to us here! In all other respects, excepting perhaps the moderate tonnage duty on foreign vessels, commerce will be free, retaining the present customs-duties on the importation of manufactures and commodities of Europe and the Indies, and our own exportations without restriction; then our products will increase, and merchandise will fall in price; the farmers and other inhabitants will get the proper recompense for their labor, and can supply themselves with the surplus that may be needful for their maintenance under conditions as favorable as the citizens of the United States. Nothing can serve more vigorously to bring about the complete disunion of the eastern and western sections of America; and the right of internal navigation being reserved exclusively by Spain, the Mississippi, the Ohio, and the rivers emptying into them will be covered with Spanish vessels manned by Spanish subjects. A vigorous race of men well armed and equipped will erect an impenetrable barrier against all our enemies with very little expense to the crown.

The arrangements in regard to these principles set in order by the thorough understanding of our minister will produce the most important results. New Orleans will become the greatest emporium of commerce in the known world, because here the supplementary millions of inhabitants are likely to disembark, and here the merchant and the adventurer can find all the products of North America in superior quality, and in the greatest abundance; the revenues of Spain will follow the increase in agriculture and the extension of commerce; and I am persuaded that I do not exaggerate when I say that in less than a century the crown of Spain will derive more revenues from the single port of New Orleans than will the Congress of the United States from the commerce of all the Atlantic region.

Oh, sir, had I the eloquence of an angel, all my force and fire would be consumed in impressing upon the ministry this new but needful doctrine. Louisiana, important in itself when considered as the frontier of Mexico, cannot be overestimated; with this province lost to Spain, the Mexican kingdom will be stirred to its very depths in less than fifty years; in vain may Spain populate its dominions in Louisiana; in vain will she endeavor to win over the Western Americans if she cannot secure them the sale of their products or furnish them what they need on the same terms as the other nations, because if they cannot sell or exchange the fruits of their industry, their situation will be the same as that of the most rigorous exclusion from the Mississippi, and the same consequences must ensue. I fear that this language may not be acceptable to the ministry; rarely are disagreeable truths well received nor those which prophesy misfortune well recompensed; but, sir, acting in accordance with the principles I profess, I feel absolutely bound by all the ties that govern men of honor throughout the world to give my opinion with candor, and to offer the advice which I believe best calculated to further the immediate objects of the sovereign, and to afford permanent security

to his extensive dominions against all possible injury. For the meditating mind no study should appear more important or more rational than that of avoiding misfortunes and preventing evils, however remote ; at all times the mind of the prudent, the treasure of the rich, and the faculties of the powerful have been employed to these ends. It is true that at present we are in a state of profound calm, and the dangers are seen only at a great distance, but let us not be deceived by appearances ; black clouds may soon gather over the heads of those whose sky is now most brilliant, and in the midst of the deceitful calm they enjoy, the tempest that is to overwhelm them has perhaps already begun to brew.

In the royal decisions I notice that His Majesty has graciously deigned to promise the people of Kentucky all the favor, support, and advantages consistent with his royal goodness, in the situation in which they find themselves, conformable to the interests of his kingdoms ; allow me, therefore, through your instrumentality to beseech him for a grant of arms and ammunition in favor of this country¹ which will be of use whenever the circumstances demand it. As soon as we shall have determined to withdraw from the government of the United States, we ought to have arms to defend ourselves against the Indians or any other enemy that might purpose to interfere with our measures, and we do not know where to find these supplies except in New Orleans or at the Strait.² If the court decides to grant this request, I should recommend that the arms and ammunition destined for this purpose should be sent secretly to L'Ance à la Graisse, from which in case of necessity they could be taken to Kentucky in a few days.

Permit me to make a few observations in regard to a personal matter, and I will conclude this long piece of writing. You will recollect that at the beginning of this affair I believed it highly important to convince the people of the Ohio settlements that the transportation of merchandise from New Orleans could be made at a lower cost than from the Atlantic seaboard across the Appalachian mountains, and you can certify that in order to establish this fact in particular I invested 14,000 dollars in merchandise purchased here for the Falls of the Ohio. Now I must tell you that the trip was made, but on account of the inefficiency of the captain the cargo suffered considerable damage, which in turn caused me great loss ; still what I claimed was clearly demonstrated to the satisfaction of the entire section of country, so that, sir, at my own private expense an important political point is established. I have suffered greatly in the experience ; nevertheless with the effects saved I bought two hundred casks of tobacco payable from the harvest of this year, which I shall receive on my return to Kentucky. If, by reason of the restriction under which you have lain up to the present regarding the purchase of this commodity, you cannot have them bought on behalf of the royal treasury, I shall lose all of my principal ; accordingly I hope that, in view of the fact that, as I say above, I undertook this business to impress the people of Kentucky with the utility of dispensing with the commerce of

¹ Kentucky.

² Detroit.

the Atlantic states, you will promise me forthwith to receive the tobacco at the proposed price of eight dollars a hundred pounds, with which I can make up for my expenses at least, believing as I do that this cannot be prejudicial in any way to the king.

Allow me to stop my reflections here, and to bring to an end two years of assiduous labors for the cause of His Majesty. I shall be very happy if these observations appear to possess the soundness with which I wished to form them, and still happier if they produce the effects which I anxiously desire; but whatever may be their merit, I am sure of the purest intentions when I prefer the service of real advantage to that of merely pleasing. I have laid aside the language of pomp and adulation, and have striven to direct myself to one who may understand me simply and truly.

I must beg you to favor me as soon as possible with a reply to those points which demand it, for I earnestly wish to return to Kentucky, where my presence is very necessary at the present juncture, while the convention is in session. I have the honor to be, with the greatest respect, your most obedient and humble servant

JAMES WILKINSON

Brigadier Estevan Miró, governor and intendant of the provinces of Louisiana and West Florida.

III. JAMES WILKINSON TO GENERAL ESTEVAN MIRÓ [Giving a list of persons to be pensioned].¹

NEW ORLEANS, September 18, 1789.

Sir:

I have had the honor to receive yours of to-day, in reply to my reflections of the seventeenth instant, and I shall faithfully carry out your instructions. Enthusiastic as I am over all my operations, you may confide absolutely in my putting into practice a constant activity and zeal in behalf of the cause I have embraced, without being idle at my post, and always attending to the duties of a vigilant and faithful sentinel.

Throughout my life I have abhorred venality, hence I own to some misgiving lest the aid² I have requested may subject me to the suspicion of possessing a sordid or avaricious spirit. In fact no circumstance, other than that of real necessity, could have induced me to proffer such a plea; but, finding myself actually under considerable expense by reason of certain loans and extraordinary private outlays that reach the sum of twelve thousand dollars, and which I have judged necessary to make sure of my friends and promote our cause, it has been impossible for me to go ahead and satisfy your hopes as well as my own desires without support.

¹ Spanish translation in Archivo Histórico-Nacional, Madrid, Estado, Legajo, 3898 B.

² *I. e.*, of seven thousand dollars asked for in the preceding communication to Miró, as a fund upon which Wilkinson might draw in furtherance of the general scheme, and in reimbursement of previous expenses connected with it. Cf. *infra*.

I am entirely content with the receipt of the seven thousand dollars under the conditions you propose, but I must ask you that no one outside of the confidential servants of the crown shall know of this loan. Should this circumstance leak out, it might soon be brought to the notice of Congress, and by arousing the jealous fears of that body, expose me to great embarrassment.

With the greatest respect, I have the honor to be, sir, your most humble and obedient servant

JAMES WILKINSON.

P. S. Enclosed you will find the list you ask for.

J. W.

Brigadier General Estevan Miró.

[*Enclosure :*] List of the prominent men ("notables") of Kentucky who should be pledged to the interests of His Catholic Majesty, with explanation of the character of each.¹

	Dollars.
Harry Innes, Esq., attorney-general and counselor at law; gets 500 dollars a year from the state of Virginia.	1,000
Benjamin Sebastian, lawyer from Virginia. ²	1,000
John Brown, member of Congress.	1,000
Caleb Wallace, one of our judges; enjoys a thousand dollars a year from the state of Virginia.....	1,000
John Fowler, a zealous advocate of our policy, and a man of influence....	1,000
Benjamin Loghan [<i>sic</i>], recent commander of the militia.....	800
Isaac Shelby, a man of fortune and of great influence.....	800
James Gerrard, ³ colonel in the militia, and a man of influence.....	800
William Wood, an official of much power	500
Henry Lee, colonel in the militia...	500
Robert Johnston, colonel in the militia	500
Richard Taylor, a man of influence.	500
General Lawsen arrived in Kentucky just as I was leaving it. He is a gentleman of respectable talents and military knowledge. He is my friend and will adopt our policy.....	1,000
George Nicolas, Esq., arrived recently in Kentucky. He has not entered into our political concerns. He is one of the wealthiest gentlemen in	

These are my confidential friends and support my plan.

These favor separation from the United States and a friendly connection with Spain.

These favor separation from Virginia but do not carry their views any further.

¹ The copy in the Archives of the Indies is here given. The chief points of verbal dissimilarity from that in the state papers at Madrid will be noted in the proper places.

² The words "from Virginia" are omitted in the Madrid copy.

³ Gerrard? Cf. Green, *The Spanish Conspiracy*, 77. [ED.]

Some of these have British leanings; some favor the interests of Congress; some are for separation from Virginia, others are opposed to it. All are working without union or concert; but they are our enemies, and hence it is necessary to win them over.

the country, of great ability, and it will be a great point to win him over to our political views. I have been his friend for some time, ¹ and I think that he will concur.....	2,000
Alexander Scot Bullet, ² a man of ability and fortune, but very changeable; still he will be of use to our cause.	1,000
Thomas Marshal, a surveyor.....	1,000
Humphrey Marshal, a villain without principles, very artful, and could be very troublesome	600
George Mutter, ³ a judge; gets a thousand dollars a year from Virginia.....	1,200
Green Clay, a private individual possessed of some influence.....	500
Samuel Taylor, idem.....	500
Robert Caldwell, colonel in the militia.....	500
Richard Canderson, ⁴ a popular surveyor, but a person of no ability.....	1,000
	17,700 ⁵

It would unquestionably be good policy to gain men of influence and ability in the other settlements along the Ohio and the rivers that flow into it. Your excellency should have discretionary powers for this purpose as well as for diminishing, increasing, taking away, or granting stipends, according to the proportion that the conduct of the agents may deserve or the interests of the king require. The two federal judges and the officials to the northwest of the Ohio, who are in charge of the settlements along the rivers Muskingum and Miami, are suitable persons for the object first named, but as each of these gets a salary of a thousand dollars a year, I should judge two thousand dollars necessary in order to alienate them from the United States. In most cases I would make a conditional contract, that is, pay such and such a sum for such and such services.

JAMES WILKINSON.

3. *Two Letters from George Farragut to Andrew Jackson, 1815-1816.*

THE interesting letter of Admiral Farragut printed in the REVIEW of April, 1904, led me to glance over certain years of the

¹ The rendering in the Madrid copy is: "He is my intimate friend."

² Colonel Alexander Leatt Bullit? Cf. Gayarré, *Louisiana: Spanish Domination*, 209. [ED.]

³ Muter? [ED.]

⁴ Richard C. Anderson. Cf. Green, *Spanish Conspiracy*, 77; Brown, *Political Beginnings of Kentucky*, 194. [ED.]

⁵ The total should be 18,700.